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SARDOU.
The black pearl.

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The Black Pearl: a Comedy in Three Acts: by Victorien Sardou: Translated by Barrett H. Clark

Samuel French: Publisher
28-30 West Thirty-eighth St.: New York

LONDON

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GENERAL EDITOR

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VICTORIEN SARDOU

Victorien Sardou (1831-1908) was one of the most ingenious dramatists of modern times. For more than thirty years he was a commanding figure in the French theater, to which he contributed over a hundred comedies, melodramas, and librettos. The wide range and extraordinary fertility of his talent may be estimated by comparing such works as "Patrie!" "La Perle noire," ("The Black Pearl"), "La Tosca," and "Les Pattes de mouche" ("A Scrap of Paper"). While Sardou was not a great thinker, his exhaustive knowledge of stage technic entitles him to a position among the most important of nineteenth century playwrights.

"The Black Pearl," requires no very difficult acting. The costumes, which ought to be early nineteenth century, might (except for one important anachronism) be modern. The stage-directions in the text are adequate.

THE BLACK PEARL

PERSONS IN THE PLAY

M. TRICAMP
CORNÉLIUS
BALTHAZAR
VANDERVEN
PETERSEN
FIRST POLICE OFFICER
SECOND POLICE OFFICER
CHRISTIANE
SARA
GUDULE
MERCHANTS AND THEIR WIVES.

The scene is Amsterdam, 1825.

THE BLACK PEARL

ACT I

SCENE: *A large room on the ground-floor of the home of a rich Dutch merchant. At the back, to the spectator's left, is the principal entrance; to the right of this is a window, protected by iron bars, opening upon the street. Between the door and the window is a cupboard. Down-stage to the left, a large fireplace. Half-way up-stage on the same side, a passage-way opens upon another room; next to it is a wooden stairway leading to the upper floor. Down-stage to the left is the door of CHRISTIANE'S room. Half-way up-stage on the same side is the door of BALTHAZAR'S office. To the left is a large table; here and there are sofas, chairs, a copper lamp, etc.*

Just before the curtain rises, the sound of a gathering thunderstorm is heard. As the curtain rises, GUDULE is seen at the left, kneeling. CHRISTIANE comes from her room, a small packet in her hand; she goes to the window. As she is about to open it a bright flash of lightning momentarily blinds her, and almost at the same time the crash of thunder breaks over the house. CHRISTIANE shrieks and falls into a chair.

GUDULE. Ah, Mademoiselle Christiane—right over the house!

CHRISTIANE. I was so frightened!

GUDULE. I heard that, and no mistake! And I'm deaf. Heavens, my child, I can't get up, now! This is the end of the world!

CHRISTIANE. (*Helping her to her feet*) Not yet—good old Gudule! Sit there!

GUDULE. You are pale yourself—poor little dear!

CHRISTIANE. My heart's beating at a terrific rate! (*She goes to the window-sill where she takes the packet she had left there*)

GUDULE. Don't open the window, Mademoiselle Christiane, you'll attract the lightning! (*She stops her ears with her apron. The thunder is heard rolling farther off now; the rainfall is not so constant as before. The lightning-flashes continue*)

CHRISTIANE. The storm's passing over—and the rain-fall is not so heavy. (*To herself, after glancing at the street outside*) He won't come in this weather.—What shall I do? (*A knock is heard at the outer door*)

GUDULE. Someone's knocking.

CHRISTIANE. (*Disturbed*) Yes, it's Monsieur Balthazar! (*She tries to hide the packet. The knocking continues without interruption*)

GUDULE. Mademoiselle Christiane, I can't move a finger! You please open the door!

BALTHAZAR. (*Outside*) Christiane! Gudule!

CHRISTIANE. (*Hiding the packet in the cupboard*) Very well, I'm coming. (*She opens the door*)

(*Enter BALTHAZAR and CORNÉLIUS. Both come in hurriedly, shaking the water from their clothes. On CORNÉLIUS' shoulder is a large*

kite, the tail of which is composed of paper sunflowers.)

BALTHAZAR. The idea! To keep us waiting outside in such weather!

CORNÉLIUS. Brrr! Quick, quick! Some fire, Gudule!

BALTHAZAR. Towels—dry clothes—slippers!

(CHRISTIANE runs back and forth, carrying the wet coats and hats into the room to the right.)

CORNÉLIUS. We're running streams!

BALTHAZAR. Here, wipe off the water—quick!

GUDULE. *(Wiping the floor)* Oh, Lord save us—my poor floor!

CORNÉLIUS. Not the floor: us!

BALTHAZAR. *(Putting on a dry coat)* Of course—she's so Dutch—and then she doesn't hear.

CHRISTIANE. *(Going to CORNÉLIUS to relieve him of his cape)* Will you allow me, Monsieur Cornélius—?

CORNÉLIUS. My dear child! And I never even shook hands with you! Why, you're frozen! What's the trouble?

BALTHAZAR. You're red as a beet!

CHRISTIANE. That terrible crash a moment ago—I'm still trembling!

BALTHAZAR. Did you hear it, too?

CORNÉLIUS. *(Rubbing CHRISTIANE'S hands)* Poor child!

BALTHAZAR. Every window in Amsterdam looked like a burning flame.

CHRISTIANE. Were you in the street?

BALTHAZAR. *(Warming himself by the fire)* I was on the Amstel Quay—under a projecting roof—with him.

CHRISTIANE. Under a roof! And how wet you are! Soaked to the skin!

(CORNÉLIUS puts the kite against the table, left.)

BALTHAZAR. Do you know, *he* was there, had been for an hour, sitting on a chair. You'd never imagine what he was doing! Trying to fly his kite over the Amstel!

CHRISTIANE. His kite?

BALTHAZAR. Yes. The idea—flying a kite in this weather! And he's a sane-minded man, a scholar, even—the most renowned chemist in Amsterdam.

CORNÉLIUS. Don't listen to him, my dear. He doesn't know what he is saying, the ignoramus! I don't fly my kite for amusement; I was trying to prove (*He takes the kite*) the presence of nitric acid in electricity-charged clouds. See, the papers on the tail of my kite have turned pink.

BALTHAZAR. Is that why you were standing there?

CORNÉLIUS. (*Goes to the back and lays the kite against the wall, next to the window*) Of course. You see, the houses were separated—clear horizon, ten lightning-rods in sight—and all on fire! It was perfectly arranged for me. I've been on the lookout long enough for this storm. I wanted to study it at close range. (*Thunder is heard in the distance.—*CORNÉLIUS rubs his hands) Rumble, I know what you do now, and I'll tell you whenever you like! (*The women lay the table-cloth*)

BALTHAZAR. (*Going to the window*) What the devil do you find so interesting in thunder and lightning?

CORNÉLIUS. Poor fellow! Interesting? (*A flash of lightning*) What is that, now?

BALTHAZAR. (*Startled*) Oh! A streak of lightning! (*He comes down-stage*)

CORNÉLIUS. (*Also coming down-stage*) Yes, but what kind?

BALTHAZAR. Why—it's ordinary lightning.

CORNÉLIUS. (*Seating himself in front of the fire*) You don't understand: there is lightning and lightning: lightning of the First Class, in the form of a streak or a zig-zag; Second Class, in the form of a sheet; and finally the Third Class, or Globular. Now the question is, is this really spherical or is it only an optical illusion? That's been troubling me for a long time. You will of course reply that the globe has been observed beyond a doubt by Howard, Schubler, Kantz——

BALTHAZAR. I reply nothing at all!—Here, the table is set, let us——

CORNÉLIUS. (*Interrupting and holding him by the arm*) But they have never observed it as carefully as I just did. There is positively a globe.

BALTHAZAR. Then it's all right?

CORNÉLIUS. Quite.

BALTHAZAR. And you are happy?

CORNÉLIUS. I am.

BALTHAZAR. Then let us have supper!

CORNÉLIUS. (*Rising*) Yes—supper! (*They start for the table*)

BALTHAZAR. What, only two places? (*To CHRISTIANE*) Aren't you——?

CHRISTIANE. I'm not hungry, Monsieur Balthazar. Excuse me, but this storm has so upset me——

CORNÉLIUS. All the more reason why you should eat something, my child.

CHRISTIANE. No, please, let me run around and wait on you—I couldn't possibly sit still! Gudule can't move! I'd rather wait on you. (*She goes out, right*)

CORNÉLIUS. (*Following her with his eyes*) What's the matter with her to-night?

BALTHAZAR. (*Sitting at the table*) The storm—women are so nervous.

(CHRISTIANE goes back and forth during this scene.)

CORNÉLIUS. (*Likewise sitting down*) If they were not, we should be deprived of the happiness of protecting them like children. This little one is particularly delicate. Really, I can't look at her but that tears come to my eyes—she is so sweet, so good, so tender!

BALTHAZAR. (*Serving CORNÉLIUS*) Ha, Master Cornélius, you are nearly as enthusiastic about Mademoiselle Christiane as you are about your thunder!

CORNÉLIUS. It's not the same thing—though her eyes flash lightning!

BALTHAZAR. When they are directed upon yourself! I've noticed it.

CORNÉLIUS. What, you—?

BALTHAZAR. Indeed I have!

CORNÉLIUS. Sh! Here she is!

CHRISTIANE. (*On the threshold*) What sort of beer will you have?

BALTHAZAR. I think we'll have some French wine; beer doesn't make one so talkative as wine, and I want to make Cornélius gossip.

CHRISTIANE. I'll get some at once! (*She disappears*)

BALTHAZAR. Gone!

CORNÉLIUS. You say you've noticed——?

BALTHAZAR. Yes, I've noticed, you infant scholar, that you amuse yourself in other ways than flying a kite over the Amstel——

CORNÉLIUS. Do you think for an instant——?

BALTHAZAR. Why, for the past three months, Cornélius—and it wasn't for the sake of gazing at my handsome countenance, either—you have come here twice a day: at noon, on your way to your

classes in the zoological garden, and at four, on your way home.

CORNÉLIUS. (*Quickly*) It was the quickest way.

BALTHAZAR. Yes—to fall in love.

CORNÉLIUS. Ah, but Christiane——

BALTHAZAR. Let's talk sense: Christiane is no ordinary girl, you know: she was a little waif whom my mother adopted. She is practically a sister to me. She is intelligent, and fairly well educated; enough, I assure you, to admire a scientist like you. Now you take her hands in yours, inquire after her health: you lend her books which she devours. Why, you give her a complete miniature course in chemistry when she shows you a spot on her dress! Natural history when one of you refers to a pot of flowers! Physiology when you catch sight of the cat. And the way she listens to you: all ears, all eyes—and you appear to doubt a love-affair between a teacher of twenty-five and a student of eighteen! Nonsense!

CORNÉLIUS. (*Resolutely*) Well, I *do* love her. Now what have you to say?

BALTHAZAR. What have *you*?

CORNÉLIUS. I wish to make her my wife!

BALTHAZAR. Then say so!

CORNÉLIUS. I do.

BALTHAZAR. You're talking nonsense.

CORNÉLIUS. You are.

BALTHAZAR. But——

CORNÉLIUS. Sh! Here she is!

(CHRISTIANE *re-enters with a bottle of wine.*)

CHRISTIANE. Here is our best wine, Monsieur Balthazar.

BALTHAZAR. (*Pouring the wine, then stopping*

to cast a sorrowful glance at the little label on the bottle) With the date written out——

CHRISTIANE. (*Sadly*)—in her own hand!

BALTHAZAR. (*Sighing*) Poor woman—she always used to label them that way.

CORNÉLIUS. Who?

BALTHAZAR. My mother, Cornélius.

CORNÉLIUS. (*Grasping BALTHAZAR'S hand*) I beg your pardon!

BALTHAZAR. And when I think that scarcely a year ago she was here—let's not talk about it, Cornélius!

CORNÉLIUS. If you have no hope of seeing her again, then you are right, Balthazar; never mention her, it will bring only sorrow. But if you believe, as I do, in a happier world where we shall see our loved ones again, then let us by all means speak of her. Forget that her death is painful only to remember that it is a bright hope. Let us think of those dear dead who are more living than we, because they are nearer God.

BALTHAZAR. You are right, Balthazar—but look, the child is crying.

CORNÉLIUS. (*Rising*) Christiane! My dear Christiane! (*CHRISTIANE turns aside and hides her face without answering; then, no longer able to restrain the tears, she goes out quickly into her room*)

BALTHAZAR. She is going to her room to cry. She loved her so tenderly. (*Rising*) Well, I'm not hungry now—oh, and since the ice is broken between us, shall I speak to her about your—plans?

CORNÉLIUS. Oh, not now.

BALTHAZAR. That's so. You are assured of your happiness, you can afford to wait, (*With a sigh*) but I——

CORNÉLIUS. Yes?

BALTHAZAR. I too love someone, but I have no hope—don't say anything about it. By the way, I shouldn't mention it to a mere friend, only Christiane's future husband should know.

CORNÉLIUS. What is it?

BALTHAZAR. (*Taking tobacco and pipes from the table*) Did you ever wonder under what circumstances, Cornélius, this young girl was taken into our family?

CORNÉLIUS. (*Filling his pipe*) I have, but I came to the conclusion, as everyone else has, that your good mother (*Grasping BALTHAZAR'S hand*) I may speak of her now, may I not? that your good mother, the most kind-hearted of women—

BALTHAZAR. Yes, but the exact circumstances—you don't know; I'm going to tell you.

CORNÉLIUS. Very well.

BALTHAZAR. A short time after my father's death, in 1812—thirteen years this Christmas—my mother was at Mass one Sunday. There was a large crowd about her; and all at once she felt someone pressing against her. She paid no attention at first, then she felt it again, and thought someone was trying to pick her pocket. She caught the hand of the thief—the tiny hand of a little girl, a delicate, pink-skinned child—

CORNÉLIUS. Christiane?

BALTHAZAR. Yes. My mother's eyes filled with tears to see those little cherub's fingers learning to do wrong at so tender an age. She immediately released the child, because she pitied her, then her sense of charity and justice told her it was wrong to do so. Who knew whether Providence had not sent her this tender soul to save! Then she took little Christiane home; the child cried and said her aunt would beat her. My mother comforted her, made her talk, and finally learned that the child's parents had been tumblers who had come from La

Frise, the sort who wander about from fair to fair; that the little girl had been trained at a very early age to do acrobatic feats; that the father was killed while performing a dangerous act, the mother died of sorrow and poverty, and that the so-called "Aunt" was a bohemian of the same tribe, who beat the child, and taught her to steal. My good mother kept the little one, and the "Aunt," as you may easily imagine, did not come to claim her. She taught her to read and write—but first, to pray: that has been her faith—and before long, Christiane was a model of sweetness and decency. And what a housekeeper! You know her, Cornélius! And then she's pretty and good and prudent. She would sit up all night if I allowed her, making clothes for the poor, or staying with some sick neighbor. Cornélius, I feel that my dear mother, in dying, left her splendid qualities, her sweet face and her kind heart, to Christiane. Thanks to her, I can now make you a gift of the greatest blessing on earth: a good, lovable, and upright woman!

CORNÉLIUS. I thank you from the bottom of my heart, Balthazar. When—when shall we have the wedding?

BALTHAZAR. Are you perfectly sure of yourself?

CORNÉLIUS. Of course. Why should I not be?

BALTHAZAR. I don't know—I thought perhaps—the daughter of circus-performers—a bohemian——?

CORNÉLIUS. Well, what of it?

BALTHAZAR. And she was found—as I have told you!

CORNÉLIUS. She is fundamentally, honest; she was taught evil, but how quickly she learned what is good!

BALTHAZAR. You are right. But think, Cornélius: a street-waif? No relative to lead her to the altar! No family!

CORNÉLIUS. All the more reason!

BALTHAZAR. No name!

CORNÉLIUS. I shall give her an honorable one.

BALTHAZAR. You are so splendid! I am proud to be your friend. (*There is a knock at the front door*)

CORNÉLIUS. Someone's knocking.

BALTHAZAR. Yes.

CORNÉLIUS. I'll go.

BALTHAZAR. No, no. Don't move. (*He opens the door, and VANDERVEN enters.—Aside*) Well! who is he? I don't know him?

VANDERVEN. (*Who enters quietly*) Monsieur, I am happy to see you. (*Catching sight of CORNÉLIUS*) Monsieur, also! (*BALTHAZAR and CORNÉLIUS look at him in amazement. He continues, after catching his breath*) It's nothing—an accident——

CORNÉLIUS and BALTHAZAR. An accident!

VANDERVEN. (*Panting*) Yes—oh, it's not much! My niece was on her way to the theater; she tried to jump a little brook, and she sprained her ankle.

BALTHAZAR. Where is she?—Gudule! (*A moment later enter GUDULE*)

VANDERVEN. Outside—it's really not serious. Come in, dear. (*BALTHAZAR goes to the door and offers his arm to a lady whom he does not recognize*) Mademoiselle——

SARA. (*Who is veiled*) It's nothing to trouble about, Monsieur! I'm more frightened than hurt. (*He conducts her to a chair, where she sits down*) My Uncle is so nervous—he is exaggerating! (*She lifts her veil, at the same time that GUDULE gives her a glass of water*)

BALTHAZAR. (*Aside, recognizing her*) Sara!

CORNÉLIUS. What?

BALTHAZAR. (*Deeply moved*) Heavens! It's she!

CORNÉLIUS. (*Surprised*) She?

BALTHAZAR. (*Interrupting*) Sh!

VANDERVEN. Well, now we're comfortably settled among friends, Sara—! (*To BALTHAZAR*) You know, I was a friend of your father's? A splendid man—(*He looks at his watch*) I must have the carriage brought. (*He walks up-stage*)

CORNÉLIUS. (*Going with him*) Allow me, Monsieur—

VANDERVEN. No, no, I much prefer—it will do me good—my head is all in a whirl, and my physician has forbidden me to subject myself to violent emotions, and this has—

CORNÉLIUS. Very well.

VANDERVEN. Wait for me, Sara. (*At the threshold*) It's nothing, you know—nothing at all, my dear.

SARA. I'm all right now, Uncle.

VANDERVEN. A little walk in the air will do good.

CORNÉLIUS. For Mademoiselle?

VANDERVEN. No—for myself!

CORNÉLIUS. Oh, I see.

VANDERVEN. (*As he leaves*) Yes.

CORNÉLIUS. Very well. (*Closes the door*) Ha! That uncle!

BALTHAZAR. Ah, Mademoiselle, to think that you are in my home! I simply cannot believe it!

SARA. (*Gaily*) Yes, Monsieur, it's I: one has to resort to all manner of means to see you. (*BALTHAZAR motions GUDULE to leave*)

CORNÉLIUS. (*Aside, as he comes down-stage and sees BALTHAZAR'S gesture*) Ah! I am in the way, too! (*He returns to take his hat, cape, and kite*)

BALTHAZAR. (*To SARA*) And I never dared show myself at your home!

SARA. Why not, Monsieur?

BALTHAZAR. Why not? It's all changed now!

SARA. (*Laughing*) Dare something, at least!

BALTHAZAR. Very well, Mademoiselle. (*To*
CORNÉLIUS, *who is at the door*) Are you going?

CORNÉLIUS. Yes, I am.

BALTHAZAR. (*Quickly bringing him back*) No, no. Stay! He is a friend, Mademoiselle Sara, almost a brother, before whom I can speak with more assurance——

SARA. I know Monsieur Cornélius: I have seen him so often.

CORNÉLIUS. (*Surprised*) Here, Mademoiselle?

BALTHAZAR. Of course. Don't you recognize Mademoiselle?

CORNÉLIUS. (*Trying to remember*) Now, it seems that——

SARA. Don't you remember the little dressmaker who used to come and mend the laces of dear Madame Vanderlys?

CORNÉLIUS. What, little Sara—charming little Sara——?

SARA. Stop, now, or I shan't dare say it was I!

CORNÉLIUS. Is it?

BALTHAZAR. Of course!

CORNÉLIUS. (*Sitting down with BALTHAZAR*) Is it possible? You? But how——?

SARA. You mean, how does it happen that that young girl who was so pretty—and yet so poor, so neglected—to-day has a home, horses and carriages——?

CORNÉLIUS. And this uncle whom we have just seen?

SARA. Hasn't Monsieur Balthazar told you? (*To BALTHAZAR*) Didn't you tell him, Monsieur? Don't you ever talk about me?

BALTHAZAR. Oh, a great deal—only—to myself!

SARA. Monsieur Cornélius, one morning as I was going to work, my uncle—whom I didn't know at that time—came for me in a great carriage and took me to his brother Monsieur Vanderven the banker, who was sick in bed. He took me in his arms and called me daughter. I couldn't understand——! How could that man, whom I had never seen, be my father? It was all carefully explained to me. Still I didn't understand everything. He took my hand, the poor man, and said: "My dear child, I am dying, and I want to make reparation for the wrong I have done in neglecting you for so long. I have suffered more than you, for I might have had an angel like you all my life long, but I never deserved it, because I never wanted it." Then he kissed me, and cried. I cried, too. Then some lawyers came in, and we both signed papers, and everybody began to call me Mademoiselle Vanderven. The next day I was left alone, for he died without my learning to know him or love him. That is why, Monsieur Cornélius, I have a home and horses and carriages.

CORNÉLIUS. This uncle who came with you ——?

SARA. Sometimes I catch myself saying, "Are you really my uncle?"

CORNÉLIUS. And he answers?

SARA. That he will be something better still.

BALTHAZAR. What?

SARA. My husband.

CORNÉLIUS. Good Heavens!

BALTHAZAR. (*Troubled, as he sinks back into his chair*) Your husband! He?! (*All rise*)

SARA. (*Looking at him*) Well, what of it?

CORNÉLIUS. (*Aside to BALTHAZAR*) Are you going to——?

BALTHAZAR. (*Controlling himself*) I—I—beg your pardon, Mademoiselle. Well, why not indeed?

SARA. (*Feigning indifference*) But I am in no hurry. I have a wide field in which to choose.

CORNÉLIUS. Ah, you have a wide field——?

SARA. I have at least many friends; everyone is not like Monsieur Balthazar, who has not even called on me since I came into my fortune. He used to run up those six flights so quickly, when Madame Vanderlys had some work for me!

BALTHAZAR. (*Sadly*) Ah, then! But now I never go out.

CORNÉLIUS. No, he never goes out.

SARA. (*To BALTHAZAR*) But, I saw you last Sunday. You looked in the other direction—as if you had not seen me.

CORNÉLIUS. (*Thrusting BALTHAZAR forward*) Answer that!

BALTHAZAR. You see, you were surrounded by six gentlemen, who appeared so interested and gallant——

SARA. Well, Monsieur Balthazar?

BALTHAZAR. Well, Mademoiselle, I don't know anything about fine manners. I'm a perfect bear, and the sight of a well dressed lady, even you——

CORNÉLIUS. Don't listen to him, Mademoiselle, he doesn't know what he is saying! He was most anxious to see you.

BALTHAZAR. I?

CORNÉLIUS. Yes, you were. We dined together afterward, and you were so sad. You sighed the whole time.

SARA. Why?

CORNÉLIUS. Why? Don't you guess? Because, Mademoiselle, you are rich——

BALTHAZAR. (*Trying to stop him*) Cornélius!

CORNÉLIUS. (*Speaking more loudly*) Because your fortunes are so unequal, because he loves you, Mademoiselle—he adores you!

BALTHAZAR. Cornélius—please——!

CORNÉLIUS. (*Continuing as before*) I say he adores you! (*Aside to BALTHAZAR*) Don't deny it. I am proposing for you!

SARA. (*Quietly*) Your scruples do you great credit.

CORNÉLIUS. (*Pointing to BALTHAZAR*) He is very conscientious.

SARA. Since I came into my fortune, I see so many people who adore me, that I really don't know what to do or whom to believe. I should prefer to throw all my money into the Amstel than marry a man who wanted me for it's sake.

BALTHAZAR. (*To CORNÉLIUS*) You see? I was right.

CORNÉLIUS. (*To SARA*) Do you imagine——?

SARA. Would you like to know my ideal?

CORNÉLIUS. Yes.

SARA. If I knew a man who had loved me while I was poor—well, I shouldn't think of suspecting him. I should be sure of his affection—and he of mine.

CORNÉLIUS. (*Quickly, indicating BALTHAZAR*) There he is, Mademoiselle, a man who has loved you for the past six years!

SARA. Possibly. Yes—a little.

BALTHAZAR. A little! There, you see!

CORNÉLIUS. Keep still. I maintain that you loved her, and if you would like proofs——

SARA. I should like to see only one—just a little one.

CORNÉLIUS. A little one?

SARA. (*Crossing in front of him*) Yes. Do you remember, Monsieur Balthazar, the morning I was working here, when they brought flowers for the garden?

BALTHAZAR. I should think I do!

SARA. They were orchids. I was allowed to inspect them with you. There were all sorts—

some so queer! One looked like a wasp, another like a butterfly. But one especially stood out above all the rest; red inside with two blue wings—and the red was so charming with that tint of blue—I never saw a prettier flower. And then——

BALTHAZAR. And then—let me finish, Made-moiselle—then, when we were leaning over to look at it more closely, I don't know how it happened, but your hair brushed against my face, and as you quickly drew back, your hand, which held the flower so that you might look at it more closely, broke the stem——

SARA. Yes.

BALTHAZAR. I can still hear you scream. I see you now—you were ready to cry and ask my pardon, when my mother called you from the window, and I——

SARA. And you——?

BALTHAZAR. I stayed behind and picked up the flower.

SARA. (*Joyfully*) Did you?

BALTHAZAR. And kept it, to remember that one moment of happiness—that sweet second!

SARA. And you kept it all this time?

BALTHAZAR. As the most precious of possessions, in a little locket, which I shall show you——

SARA. Do—that is all I want to know. I am so happy! If you have kept that flower to remember me, it means you loved me then. If you have kept it, then your love has lasted.

BALTHAZAR. It has.

SARA. Go and get our little flower with the blue wings. It will be the prettiest of our wedding presents.

BALTHAZAR. (*Radiantly, as he goes to CORNÉLIUS*) Our wed—our wedding presents—do you hear that, Cornélius? She said: “our wedding presents.”

CORNÉLIUS. She did. (*A carriage is heard outside*)

BALTHAZAR. Ah, Sara! Now I can tell you frankly: I love you. You will believe me now.

SARA. Truly, I suspected it a little, otherwise I should not have come here!

BALTHAZAR. Now I am going to get our flower.

CORNÉLIUS. (*Up-stage*) Quick, now. Your uncle is coming up the steps!

SARA. Not a word before him! I'll prepare him for the news!

CORNÉLIUS. (*Aside*) Yes, spare him any "emotional strain."

SARA. (*To BALTHAZAR*) To-morrow—at my home—our home!

BALTHAZAR. To-morrow—and forever!

SARA. Bring the flower!

BALTHAZAR. I shall. Yes, yes. (*They continue to speak in whispers*)

(*CORNÉLIUS opens the door and coughs to warn the couple of the presence of VANDERVEN, who enters. It is beginning to grow dark.*)

VANDERVEN. How are you now?

CORNÉLIUS. (*Hiding the lovers*) Better. (*Aside*) Have a pleasant walk?

VANDERVEN. Oh, yes. I feel better. The carriage is ready, my dear. Come.

(*CORNÉLIUS coughs.*)

SARA. (*Rising slowly and going to her uncle*) Here's Uncle! Oh, I feel much better.

VANDERVEN. It couldn't have been very serious!

BALTHAZAR. May I hear how you are getting on to-morrow, Mademoiselle?

SARA. Of course, Monsieur! Come, Uncle.
(*She goes out*)

VANDERVEN. Yes, come and see us. I'll show you my pictures.

CORNÉLIUS. (*Urging BALTHAZAR in the direction of SARA, who is seen in the antechamber. He detains VANDERVEN*) So you are a collector?

VANDERVEN Oh, no. I don't know much about pictures—otherwise I should be an enthusiast.

CORNÉLIUS. (*Bowing to VANDERVEN*) Good day. (*VANDERVEN goes out*)

BALTHAZAR. (*Stopping CORNÉLIUS, who is about to shut the door*) Let me see her once more.

CORNÉLIUS. (*Trying to stop him from leaving*) Look, look, happy mortal! (*The outer door is heard to close*)

BALTHAZAR (*Coming down-stage as CORNÉLIUS closes the inner door*). My dear, dear friend, how profoundly thankful I am!

CORNÉLIUS. Holy Saints of Paradise! Two weddings at a single blow!

BALTHAZAR. Hush—remember Christiane!

CORNÉLIUS. That's so. Come now, show me your flower with the blue wings.

BALTHAZAR. It's carefully pressed—at the bottom of a drawer in my desk, in a little steel box, together with my poor mother's pearls. It's in a locket of glass and gold with a frame of black pearls. You'll see. Where did I put the key? (*He searches his pockets*) Light a candle—it's so dark. (*BALTHAZAR goes up-stage, looking for the key in his overcoat pocket. CORNÉLIUS goes toward the fireplace to light a candle*)

(*Enter CHRISTIANE, from her room.*)

CHRISTIANE. (*Entering so quietly that she is not noticed*) Still here! I can't go out. (*She*

looks toward the window through which she catches sight of a man wearing a cape and a large hat)

CORNÉLIUS. (*At the fireplace*) Where the devil are the matches?

BALTHAZAR. To your right.

CORNÉLIUS. Ah, yes.

CHRISTIANE. He's there. (*She crosses to the cupboard, where she takes the small package, while BALTHAZAR opens the door to his room and CORNÉLIUS lights the candle. She opens the window. The shadow of a man is seen. She gives the package to the man*) Here, take it! Quick. I'm coming out at once! (*She closes the window quietly, then makes her way stealthily to GUDULE'S stairway, and disappears*)

BALTHAZAR. (*To CORNÉLIUS*) Light!

CORNÉLIUS. (*Carrying a candle in front of which he places his hand*) I'm coming, I'm coming. I'm behind you.

BALTHAZAR. (*In his office*) Oh, Cornélius!

CORNÉLIUS. (*Stopping*) What's the matter?

BALTHAZAR. Cornélius! Cornélius! (*He reappears on the threshold, pale and trembling*)

CORNÉLIUS. Well?

BALTHAZAR. Good Heavens, Cornélius! There's been a robbery!

CORNÉLIUS. (*Dropping his candle*) Robbery!

BALTHAZAR. Everything—stolen! (*Each tries to find a light, while the curtain falls*)

ACT II

BALTHAZAR'S study. *To the spectator's right is a fireplace, to the left a barred window. Farther up-stage is a door opening upon the room*

shown in the first act. At the back, a book-case. Halfway up-stage on the right is a desk; between the desk and the book-case is a filing cabinet, with a dozen files in it. There is a table to the left, by the window. There are chairs, arm-chairs, etc. about the room. The room is panelled in wood to a height of about six feet. The remainder of the walls are covered with leather-colored wallpaper. There is a large arm-chair to the right.

As the curtain rises the study is in great disorder. The two files which belong to the top part of the cabinet are lying on the floor, crushed, and all the papers scattered about the room. On the table a large leather portfolio has been tipped over, the lock broken open, and the numerous letters it contained thrown about over the floor. The desk appears to have been forced open. All about the lock the wood is scratched and bruised. The lock itself hangs in the air. The cover is so wrenched off that the interior of the desk is visible to the audience: two of the drawers have been pulled out of place. Above the desk and the panel-work, a Persian dagger is fixed in the wall. On the ceiling the steel wire, once attached to the door-bell, and running from the wall to the right of the door, is broken at a point just above the desk; the longer of the broken pieces, the one attached to the bell-cord, is twisted at th end into the form of a ring.

BALTHAZAR and CORNÉLIUS, each carrying a candle, look on stupefied. On the floor is a small steel box, which is closed.

CORNÉLIUS. Heavens, who has done this?

BALTHAZAR. (Running about the room, exam-

ining various objects) The portfolio! And the cabinet! And the desk!

CORNÉLIUS. Any money gone?

BALTHAZAR. Three hundred florins, fifteen hundred ducats—not a trace—everything—and the jewel-box, too!

CORNÉLIUS. (*Excitedly*) Is this it? (*He picks up the little box*)

BALTHAZAR. (*Opening it*) Empty! Not even the locket!

CORNÉLIUS. The locket gone, too?

BALTHAZAR. My locket! (*He goes to the window and cries out*) Thieves, thieves!

CORNÉLIUS. Don't do that.

BALTHAZAR. They have taken my locket and my flower! Why should I not shout?

CORNÉLIUS. (*Trying to calm him*) Come, now. this is childish!

BALTHAZAR. (*Excitedly*) The money and all the rest is nothing to me—I want the locket! It means everything to me—my marriage! I can't even see Sara: she might think I had been trying to deceive her!

CORNÉLIUS. Listen to me——

BALTHAZAR. No, no, no, the Burgomaster, Tricamp, lives just across the street. I'm going to tell him at once! (*At the window*) Monsieur Tricamp—come here—we've been robbed!

TRICAMP. (*Whose voice is heard outside*) Yes? Monsieur, you *do* make a lot of noise!

BALTHAZAR. Ah, Monsieur Tricamp, are you in the street there? Heaven has sent you——

TRICAMP. Possibly. I'm just returning from a ball. What's the matter?

BALTHAZAR. I've been robbed, Monsieur Tricamp. Someone's gone through my room, my desk, everything. Come here and see for yourself.

TRICAMP. The devil! I'll be with you, only give me time to change these clothes.

BALTHAZAR. No, no, Monsieur. At once, please!

TRICAMP. You will at least allow me to escort home the charming lady I now have with me? *(A knocker is heard)*

BALTHAZAR. But, Monsieur——

TRICAMP. I shan't be long—meantime here are three officers at hand. They have heard you. Now, open your door.

BALTHAZAR. At once. *(He goes out at the back. CORNÉLIUS walks about the room, examining its contents)*

TRICAMP. *(Outside)* My dear Madame, I bid you good-night!

THE LADY'S VOICE. Good-night, Monsieur Tricamp.

TRICAMP. My thoughts shall be of you.

BALTHAZAR. *(Outside)* This way, Monsieur.

TRICAMP. *(Outside)* Very well, very well.

CORNÉLIUS. *(Surveying the ruin)* Who, I wonder—who could have done it?

(Enter BALTHAZAR followed by TRICAMP.)

BALTHAZAR. This way, Monsieur.

TRICAMP. *(Speaking to the OFFICERS outside, who immediately afterward appear at the door)* You stay there and stop anyone who tries to come in or leave. *(He comes forward, smiling. He is dressed in evening clothes)* This is a pretty how d'ye do! Dance all evening, bring home a pretty woman, and just as you are saying good-night——!

BALTHAZAR. *(Lighting another candle)* Look, Monsieur, look.

TRICAMP. Ah, so here is—I beg your pardon,

I'm a little short-sighted! (*He looks through his lorgnette*)

BALTHAZAR. And here, Monsieur!

CORNÉLIUS. And there!

BALTHAZAR. And this desk!

CORNÉLIUS. And the portfolio full of letters!

BALTHAZAR. The files!

TRICAMP. (*Smilingly, through his lorgnette*)
Fancy that! Good!

BALTHAZAR. And we heard nothing, Monsieur,
saw nothing!

TRICAMP. Desk-lock forced—and the port-
folio! Splendid!

BALTHAZAR. Splendid?

TRICAMP. The money was taken, was it?

BALTHAZAR. All.

TRICAMP. Good!

CORNÉLIUS. And the jewels.

BALTHAZAR. And my locket!

TRICAMP. Bravo! House entered—robbery.
This is at least something worth being disturbed
about. (*CORNÉLIUS and BALTHAZAR look at each
other in amazement*) Do you suspect anyone?

BALTHAZAR. No one.

TRICAMP. So much the better. We shall have
the pleasure of making the discovery. (*Looking
about through his lorgnette*) I had a charm-
ing time at the Embassy Ball—lovely lady I was
with—do you know her—eh? Well, this is going
to be a very interesting and amusing little case: it
is so exciting to catch a thief!

CORNÉLIUS. When you catch him at once—yes!

TRICAMP. If he is caught at once that spoils all
the fun. Just like hunting! (*To BALTHAZAR*)
Do you hunt?

BALTHAZAR. Yes—no—I don't know—but you—

TRICAMP. Oh, yes, I still hunt occasionally.
(*He goes to the door*)

BALTHAZAR. (*To CORNÉLIUS*) That man will drive me mad!

CORNÉLIUS. (*Aside to BALTHAZAR*) Let him be. As a scientist, I respect system.

TRICAMP. Is this the door?

BALTHAZAR. The *only* door, Monsieur. Mark that!

TRICAMP. (*Turning the key in the lock*) Nice lock. Intact, I see. You carry the key with you?

BALTHAZAR. Always, Monsieur.

TRICAMP. It isn't probable that the thief had a duplicate. No, there's no damage done to the lock. He didn't come in this way. Let us look at the window.

CORNÉLIUS. The window was closed, Monsieur. My friend just opened it to call you.

TRICAMP. There are bars outside, are there not?

BALTHAZAR. (*Illuminating the window with a candle*) See how near together the bars are. A child couldn't come in that way!

TRICAMP. Well, let us look at the fireplace.

BALTHAZAR. (*Lighting the way*) Here, Monsieur.

TRICAMP. (*Kneeling before the fireplace, and tapping on the inside*) What is that?

BALTHAZAR. A hole I had made last winter, for the stovepipe.

TRICAMP. Is that hole the only one?

BALTHAZAR. As you can see!

CORNÉLIUS. No larger than that!

TRICAMP. (*Still on his knees*) Very well. The thief didn't come in there.

CORNÉLIUS. (*Going to another corner of the fireplace*) Well, if he didn't come through the chimney, or the window, or the door, where did he come in?

TRICAMP. That's just the point, Monsieur. If thieves came into rooms the way ordinary people

do, there would be no pleasure in the business. There now remains the ceiling. (*He stands up*)

BALTHAZAR. (*Raising the candle and lighting the entire room*) Do you think he could have——?

TRICAMP. (*Looking at the dagger which is seen sticking into the wall*) What's that shining——? A knife!

CORNÉLIUS. So it is! (*They go toward the wall*)

BALTHAZAR. An Oriental dagger that usually lay on the desk.

TRICAMP. We're getting warm. Now, up there, don't I see something hanging in the air?

CORNÉLIUS. Yes, a wire!

BALTHAZAR. The bell wire.

TRICAMP. Warmer and warmer. Is your desk solid?

BALTHAZAR. What?

TRICAMP. (*Jumping on a chair, then to the top of the desk*) A panel? (*He taps on the panel*)

BALTHAZAR. It's very thin.

TRICAMP. Would you like to know where your thief entered? Here. Look! (*He takes off a piece of the wall with a rule and reveals a square hole, large enough to admit a man*) Here is the door.

BALTHAZAR and CORNÉLIUS. Ah—I——

BALTHAZAR. I'd forgotten all about that.

TRICAMP. See, this piece of panel has been very skillfully replaced. Perfect! (*He sits down on the top of the desk*) That reminds me of a time in Ghent—I was only twenty—let me tell you—very funny——

BALTHAZAR. Yes, yes, but how about——?

TRICAMP. It's really too simple. Your thief came in that way. He broke the wire in order to let himself down by it. Notice that. Then he descended to the desk, where I am now standing.

Here he took the dagger, fixed it in the wall, and used it as a foot-rest. Primitive indeed!

BALTHAZAR. Yes. But what about the files?

TRICAMP. There seems to be no reason for that, except he may have fallen on them. Now follow me closely: while his right foot rested on the dagger hilt, the left found a footing on the filing-cabinet, (*He puts his left foot on the cabinet*) which fell over. Isn't that reasonable? (*He stretches his hand out to CORNÉLIUS, who assists him down*)

BALTHAZAR. Nothing escapes you, Monsieur. You are wonderful!

CORNÉLIUS. Nothing except the thief!

TRICAMP. And we shall have him soon.

BALTHAZAR. Soon?

TRICAMP. You don't know how to enjoy it all. I like to think of him trying to escape. Let him try, say I! Now we must know something about his temperament.

BALTHAZAR. His temperament?

TRICAMP. Exactly.

BALTHAZAR. But have we time? Musn't we—?

TRICAMP. We can't do better. Sit down. Now, the application of certain principles, which are well known—Please sit down, Monsieur. (*BALTHAZAR unwillingly sits down*) How can we possibly find the reason for the crime if we fail to inquire into the nature of those to whom crime is natural? The manner—hasty or deliberate—in which this was committed—that is where we are to look to find the finger-marks, the very signature of our thief.

BALTHAZAR. For Heaven's sake, let us begin!

TRICAMP. (*Phlegmatically*) Why, only yesterday morning two women were brought to me—I'm a great connoisseur in women. They were servants, suspected of stealing a shawl from their mistress. I knew the guilty one in an instant. The thief had to choose between two cashmeres, a blue

and a yellow: she took the blue. Now, one of the servants was a blond and the other a brunette. I arrested the blonde. The brunette would evidently have taken the yellow one.

CORNÉLIUS. A Solomon!

BALTHAZAR. Please, Monsieur, let us get to work!

TRICAMP. I can tell you this much already: the thief is new to the business. Look at this desk: it has been violently thrust open—and look at the débris scattered everywhere. And this hanging lock——

BALTHAZAR. So it was a novice?

TRICAMP. Yes: who is neither large nor strong, for he needed the wire and the dagger to help him descend. An average man could easily have jumped.

CORNÉLIUS. But the desk is very strong?

TRICAMP. That again reveals the weakness of the thief. Real strength is calm, sure of itself. One stroke would be sufficient. This is the work of a weakling—a woman or a child.

BALTHAZAR. A woman?

TRICAMP. I was sure of that ten minutes ago. She is young and supple. Short, too, for she had to scale the wall—a brunette, rather quick and nervous. She knows the house, for she took advantage of your absence. If you have some young woman here—a servant perhaps—don't look elsewhere: she is your thief.

BALTHAZAR *and* CORNÉLIUS. Christiane!

TRICAMP. Christiane? Well, it's she!

CORNÉLIUS. Christiane? Nonsense, Monsieur. She—she—no, that's out of the question!

BALTHAZAR. He is right, Monsieur. She was brought up here as one of the family—she's almost a sister!

CORNÉLIUS. You don't know her, Monsieur. You wouldn't think of accusing that child!

TRICAMP. Will you wager with me, Monsieur, that she is at present *not* in her room?

CORNÉLIUS. Not in her room?

BALTHAZAR. That is her room. (*He points toward the panel in the wall*)

TRICAMP. There? And do you still doubt?

CORNÉLIUS. (*Running to the panel and shouting*) Christiane! Christiane! (*A pause*)

TRICAMP. You see, she is not there! (*He sits down*)

CORNÉLIUS. I shall bring her to you, and you won't dare accuse her to her face.

(CHRISTIANE *appears on the threshold, followed by two OFFICERS.*)

BALTHAZAR. There she is!

CORNÉLIUS. See, she is not trying to escape!

(*Enter CHRISTIANE and the OFFICERS.*)

FIRST OFFICER. Monsieur, here's a young woman we arrested as she was trying to leave the house.

CORNÉLIUS *and* BALTHAZAR. Leave?

CHRISTIANE. (*Quietly, after having seen TRICAMP*) What do they want with me? Monsieur Balthazar, tell Monsieur who I am.

BALTHAZAR. Where did you come from?

CHRISTIANE. From up-stairs: Gudule was so afraid of the storm. She's asleep now. I went to sleep in the chair beside her, then I went down-stairs to fix the locks.

TRICAMP. To escape.

CHRISTIANE. Escape? Escape? How do you mean?

TRICAMP. She is calm about it!

BALTHAZAR. (*Taking CHRISTIANE'S hand and drawing her toward the desk*) Look.

CHRISTIANE. (*Turning around after having looked at the lock*) Heavens, who did it?

TRICAMP. (*Smiling*) You!

CHRISTIANE. (*Looking at them with an air of stupefaction, then turning to the OFFICERS as she screams*) You say I did that? (*She looks at BALTHAZAR, who turns his head away. She then tries to find words, but chokes*) I—I—stole—did that—!?

CORNÉLIUS. I tell you the child knows nothing about it!

Curtain

ACT III

SCENE: CHRISTIANE'S room. Down-stage to the right is a window. To the left of it, a bell. Half-way down-stage on the same side is a door. At the back, an alcove in which is a bed. Down-stage to the left is a fireplace. Half-way up-stage on the same side is a bureau, one drawer of which is open. Above it in the wall is the small passage-way which leads to BALTHAZAR'S office. Between the door and the window are a table and chair. To the left is another chair. Still another at the back, by the bed. It is night.

(*Enter the two OFFICERS, followed by TRICAMP.*)

FIRST OFFICER. (*Carrying a candle*) Monsieur, this is Mademoiselle's room.

TRICAMP. I can't get a word out of her. Well,

let her cry. You two are to stand just outside in the street, understand?

SECOND OFFICER. Yes, Monsieur.

TRICAMP. And everything you see——

FIRST OFFICER. With your permission, Monsieur, I have something to report now.

TRICAMP. Yes?

FIRST OFFICER. The baker opposite tells me that early in the evening he saw Mademoiselle Christiane at the window of the large room. She slipped a package to a man who wore a cape and a large hat. He didn't see the face. She called out to the man, "Wait for me!" Then she closed the window, and the man went off. That was two minutes before Monsieur Cornélius cried, "Stop thief!"

TRICAMP. Good! (*To the SECOND OFFICER*) Take the witness's name, and keep a good watch about the house. The first suspicious-looking individual who comes——

SECOND OFFICER. Arrest him! You may count on us, Monsieur. (*He goes out*)

TRICAMP. You, Brauwer, get Gudule and bring her to me. She is sleeping on the second floor. Knock loudly—she is said to be deaf.

FIRST OFFICER. At once, Monsieur. (*He goes out*)

TRICAMP. Everything is going splendidly!

(*Enter BALTHAZAR.*)

TRICAMP. Well, how about the young lady?

BALTHAZAR. The same. Cornélius is trying to comfort her. She does nothing but sob.

TRICAMP. Which she will continue to do for the next twenty minutes. (*He looks at his watch*) It is now two A. M. At two-thirty the reaction will set in: she will confess everything. Then will be

the time to ask questions. I know women, I have devoted a great deal of time to the subject.

BALTHAZAR. And do you think Christiane will confess?

TRICAMP. I am positive.

BALTHAZAR. Impossible!

TRICAMP. We shall see. This is her room, is it not?

BALTHAZAR. Yes, Monsieur.

TRICAMP. You see, I was not wrong. The bed has not been slept in.

BALTHAZAR. True, but then I can't think—

TRICAMP. (*Taking a chair and placing it on top of the bureau*) We must think everything.

BALTHAZAR. But if you are mistaken—

TRICAMP. That is one thing we can not think. Notice this chair—how easy it would be to—

BALTHAZAR. No, I don't want to see. Cornélius is right in defending her. You don't know how upright, how honest she is! The poor little girl—my mother found her in a church! (*He stops a moment, struck with an idea*) My God! That's so! She stole then!

TRICAMP. (*Who has been looking at the bureau drawer*) Didn't you say something about jewels and a locket?

BALTHAZAR. Yes, a locket, which is very precious to me.

TRICAMP. Gold?

BALTHAZAR. Yes, with black pearls around the edge.

TRICAMP. (*Holding out a pearl to him*) Like this?

BALTHAZAR. A pearl! A black pearl!

TRICAMP. (*Putting it on the floor and hammering it with his heel*) It must be bronze! Where does Mademoiselle Christiane get these things?

BALTHAZAR. Where did you find it?

TRICAMP. (*Pointing to the drawer*) There. That is how she came down.

BALTHAZAR. But the locket? (*He goes to the bureau*)

TRICAMP. No, this single pearl is all there was! You will find nothing else. She made up a package of everything else and gave it to an accomplice—out of the window. He was seen.

BALTHAZAR. Seen?

TRICAMP. (*Looking at his watch*) Yes.

BALTHAZAR. (*Desperately*) You—you are right—we must believe everything now!

(*Enter CORNÉLIUS.*)

TRICAMP. (*To CORNÉLIUS*) Well?

CORNÉLIUS. Nothing.

TRICAMP. Is she alone?

CORNÉLIUS. No, one of the officers is with her. I want to hear what Gudule has to say.

TRICAMP. Does a scientist like Monsieur still doubt?

CORNÉLIUS. Certainly.

BALTHAZAR. You are feverish.

CORNÉLIUS. Let us hear what Gudule will say.

TRICAMP. She is coming now.

(*Enter GUDULE.*)

FIRST OFFICER. (*At the back*) Come, this way.

GUDULE. Oh, dear, what's the trouble now? I was waked up so suddenly. What do they want with me? (*TRICAMP motions to the OFFICER, who goes out*)

BALTHAZAR. Now, Gudule, don't worry. This needn't trouble you. There has been a robbery.

GUDULE. A robbery?

BALTHAZAR. Yes.

TRICAMP. (*Sitting on a chair, left*) Yes, and we are now looking for the guilty party.

GUDULE. Oh, Lord, I've been working here for thirty years, and not a pin has ever been stolen! Oh, Lord!

TRICAMP. Come, come, my good woman—

BALTHAZAR. No one is accusing you.

GUDULE. I should think not, but if anything's been stolen while I was in the house, it's my fault all the same!

TRICAMP. That's just what we want to know about.

BALTHAZAR. Speak a little louder: she is deaf.

TRICAMP. That's so. (*Raising his voice*) We want to know whether you were here when the robbery occurred?

GUDULE. But I haven't been out, Monsieur.

TRICAMP. Not at all?

GUDULE. No, Monsieur. You see, I'm old, and I can't walk easily. I was afraid of the storm.

BALTHAZAR. Then you were in your room?

GUDULE. No, Monsieur, I couldn't walk up. I stayed down-stairs all afternoon.

TRICAMP. Have you good eyes?

GUDULE. Bad ears, Monsieur, but good eyes.

TRICAMP. Now, think well: have you seen anyone this afternoon?

GUDULE. The postman—then a neighbor—and Petersen.

TRICAMP. Ah, Petersen! Who is Petersen?

GUDULE. A neighbor—the night-watchman. Monsieur knows him.

BALTHAZAR. A poor devil we help once in a while.

TRICAMP. (*To GUDULE*) And Petersen came in?

GUDULE. No, Monsieur, he didn't. He just spoke to Christiane through the window.

TRICAMP. What did he say?

GUDULE. I didn't hear, Monsieur.

TRICAMP. No one else?

GUDULE. No, Monsieur.

TRICAMP. And where was Christiane all this time?

GUDULE. She was busy in the kitchen and the dining-room.

TRICAMP. Was she anywhere else?

GUDULE. She went to her room—to dress for supper.

TRICAMP. Was she here long?

GUDULE. About an hour, Monsieur.

TRICAMP. Did you hear anything? A hammer, for instance?

GUDULE. No, Monsieur.

TRICAMP. Doubtless the thunder was so loud you could hear nothing else?

GUDULE. And I was so afraid! Then Christiane came back—she was very pale.

TRICAMP. Ah, pale!

GUDULE. Just like me! The storm was awful!
(*She cries*)

TRICAMP. There, there. And remember, we're not accusing you!

GUDULE. Who then? Who? You don't answer! No, no, Monsieur, you can't think that! Not Christiane! The Good Lord sent her to our house—oh, if you only knew her!

TRICAMP. (*Rising*) Since it isn't you, why worry?

GUDULE. I wish it were! Accuse me, please. But don't lay a finger on her! You wouldn't dare! That child is sacred!

TRICAMP. Now, now! (*The OFFICERS re-appear*)

GUDULE. (*To BALATHAZAR*) Don't listen to him, Monsieur.

TRICAMP. (*To the OFFICERS*) Take her away!

GUBULE. (*As she is being carried off*) No, no, no, this is the end of everything! I can't stand this! I wish I had died with the dear mistress! (*BALTHAZAR helps her out*)

TRICAMP. You see? Not a single suspicious character came here, so that we must conclude that it was either the old servant or the young lady who committed the robbery. Will the scientist draw a conclusion for us?

CORNÉLIUS. Don't ask me anything: I can't think. I must be dreaming. It's all an awful nightmare.

TRICAMP. Isn't my logic good?

CORNÉLIUS. Unfortunately, yes!

TRICAMP. Then confess that the young lady is guilty.

CORNÉLIUS. I refuse to believe it until I hear her confess it in so many words. Why, even if she should confess, I doubt if I should believe her

TRICAMP. (*Again looking at his watch*) Believe whatever you like, but I shall question her.

CORNÉLIUS. Well, let us question her, then. Let me bring her here and defend her. I shall allow no one to lay hand on the woman who is to become my wife. (*He goes out*)

TRICAMP. He's going to marry her?

BALTHAZAR. (*With a sigh*) Yes!

TRICAMP. I see.

(*CORNÉLIUS returns with CHRISTIANE, who supports herself on his arm.*)

CORNÉLIUS. Come, Christiane. I'm here to help you, dear. (*He conducts her to a chair at the left*)

CHRISTIANE. Ah, Monsieur Cornélius! (*She sobs*)

TRICAMP. This is the end of the crisis. (*He*

goes to the left, sits down by CHRISTIANE, and takes her hand in his) Now, now, my child. Don't let me alarm you. Talk to me: I promise nothing will ever be said about this. Don't be ashamed. Who hasn't some little weakness, eh? Why, it's quite natural. Tell me, you just didn't think twice about it, did you? Come, you did take the jewels, didn't you?

CHRISTIANE. (*Sitting up suddenly*) Kill me if you want to, but don't repeat that! (TRICAMP retreats. CORNÉLIUS tries to calm CHRISTIANE)

TRICAMP. The devil!

BALTHAZAR. Monsieur Tricamp, please leave us alone with her; I know your presence irritates her.

(TRICAMP goes up-stage, closes the door as if he were going out, then stands silently at the back.)

BALTHAZAR. Now, Christiane!

CHRISTIANE. Leave me!

BALTHAZAR. We are alone now: he has gone.

CHRISTIANE. (*Rising*) He's gone? Well, I want to go, too. Leave me, I must go!

BALTHAZAR. (*Gently forcing her to sit down again, CORNÉLIUS aiding him*) You cannot leave, Christiane, without answering our questions. Tell us the truth, my child. I forgive you in advance, and promise that no one shall ever know a thing about it. (CHRISTIANE remains silent, and buries her face in her hands) Don't you hear me?

CHRISTIANE. I can't cry now. Make me cry!

CORNÉLIUS. (*Catching sight of TRICAMP*) She seems to have a high fever! (To CHRISTIANE) Christiane, will you listen to me, my child?

CHRISTIANE. Yes.

CORNÉLIUS. Why do you turn your head away? Why don't you answer? Don't you recognize me?

CHRISTIANE. Yes.

CORNÉLIUS. You know I love you.

CHRISTIANE. (*Facing him*) And you say I have stolen! (*She bursts into tears*)

TRICAMP. (*Aside*) Good, she is crying!

CORNÉLIUS. No, Christiane, I do not say that. My dear child, don't you see, you must help me defend you?

CHRISTIANE. Yes—you are so good. You defend me! Why should I want to steal? *Would I, in this dear house? I know, I know, you accuse me because I was once a little mite who was taught to steal. Now you call me thief!* (*She cries again*)

CORNÉLIUS. (*Rising*) I can't do anything! You talk to her, Balthazar.

BALTHAZAR. (*Taking CHRISTIANE'S hand*) Christiane, my dear. Look at me. I beg your pardon for what I said. You do care for me? Then tell me, tell me where my little locket is? That is all I want. Will you give it back to me?

CHRISTIANE. (*In despair*) Oh!

BALTHAZAR. Christiane!

CHRISTIANE. I haven't it! I haven't it! (*She rises*)

BALTHAZAR. (*Also rising*) Christiane, tell me, or I'll——!

CORNÉLIUS. (*Intervening*) Balthazar!

CHRISTIANE. You'll drive me crazy! (*She falls back into the chair, and buries her face in her hands*)

BALTHAZAR. We shall never find out anything.

CORNÉLIUS. Because there is nothing to find out.

TRICAMP. (*In an undertone*) Ridiculous, allowing ourselves to be influenced in this way! What did she say about when she was a little girl?

BALTHAZAR. She was in a circus—my mother found and adopted her.

TRICAMP. Circus! (*Pointing to the chair*) Now I see!

CORNÉLIUS. How is that?

TRICAMP. And she said something about stealing?

BALTHAZAR. She was only five—it was in a church, and——

TRICAMP. The age makes no difference: the germ was already there. There is no room for doubt now!

CORNÉLIUS. No, there isn't: of her innocence!

TRICAMP. Her innocence?

CORNÉLIUS. Yes, her innocence!

TRICAMP. The idea! But what proof—?

CORNÉLIUS. I need no proof! I have reason, and I have faith!

TRICAMP. But, but——!

CORNÉLIUS. The look in her eyes, her whole attitude—good Lord, that is enough for me!

CHRISTIANE. (*Running to CORNÉLIUS*) Then I am not alone!

TRICAMP. (*To BALTHAZAR*) You see, there is nothing to answer! If the police used such reason, where should we be?

CORNÉLIUS. I don't care about convincing you. You do your duty, and I shall do mine.

BALTHAZAR. Yours?

CORNÉLIUS. Yes: search, examine, pile up your evidence; I know something that will disprove everything!

TRICAMP. I hardly imagine that among your proofs you will refer to the fact that I found something in Mademoiselle's bureau?

CHRISTIANE. In my bureau?

CORNÉLIUS. What?

TRICAMP. This black pearl, which came from the locket.

CORNÉLIUS. Do you hear, Christiane?

CHRISTIANE. (*Surprised*) Yes.

CORNÉLIUS. Then answer! Defend yourself! Tell them!

CHRISTIANE. What can I say? I know nothing about it.

CORNÉLIUS. But this pearl—in your bureau?

CHRISTIANE. Are you accusing me?

CORNÉLIUS. No, no, but——

CHRISTIANE. Leave me! (*She throws herself on to the bed*) Does he too, think—?

TRICAMP. (*In an undertone*) Monsieur Balthazar, may I say a word to one of the officers?

BALTHAZAR. Certainly, Monsieur, let me go.

TRICAMP. No, stay here. I shall be back in a moment. (*He goes out*)

BALTHAZAR. Poor Cornélius! (*CORNÉLIUS, who has been looking intently at the pearl, stands stock-still, thinking*)

CORNÉLIUS. Sh!

BALTHAZAR. What is it?

CORNÉLIUS. (*Oblivious of BALTHAZAR, he rises, takes the pearl near the light, and looks at it again*) A white spot—burnt. Good Heavens, it might—? The thunderstorm! (*He looks at the opening in the wall*) Have you closed the study?

BALTHAZAR. Yes.

CORNÉLIUS. Give me the key! Quickly! (*He snatches the key from BALTHAZAR, then darts from the room*)

BALTHAZAR. (*Startled*) Cornélius, Cornélius! (*He follows CORNÉLIUS out*)

CHRISTIANE. (*Running to the window*) They've all left me!--What are all those men doing in the street?

TRICAMP. (*Voice outside*) Good! Stay there!

CHRISTIANE. Oh, he is coming to—! (*She turns out the lamp*) Here—(*She hides behind the door. Enter TRICAMP not seeing her*)

TRICAMP. Here! (CHRISTIANE slips out) Where's the light? (As he looks, CORNÉLIUS appears in the opening above carrying a candle. The room is lighted up)

TRICAMP. Hello, what's that?

CORNÉLIUS. (Pointing to the chair on the bureau) I beg your pardon, Monsieur Tricamp, will you be good enough to hold the chair for me?

TRICAMP. Are you coming down that way?

CORNÉLIUS. (In a state of quiet excitement) You see!

TRICAMP. What is your idea?

CORNÉLIUS. You may remember, I asked you no questions a while ago. Please allow me to pursue my own investigations without interruption.

TRICAMP. (Jokingly) So you are looking for the thief?

CORNÉLIUS. Yes.

TRICAMP. Who is not Mademoiselle?

CORNÉLIUS. Who is not Mademoiselle.

TRICAMP. And are you on his trail?

CORNÉLIUS. Perhaps. (He continues examining the passageway and the wall)

TRICAMP. Shall I help you now?

CORNÉLIUS. Thank you, not yet. Tell me, though, if you please, do you see the bell?

TRICAMP. The bell to the study?

CORNÉLIUS. Yes. It comes through the panel in the wall, in a tube of steel, as big around as your little finger. I should like to know if that bell is in this room?

TRICAMP. That's easy to see, it's getting light now.—Yes, there is the wire running along the moulding, and there—there is the bell.

CORNÉLIUS. Over there?

TRICAMP. Yes.

CORNÉLIUS. Do you notice anything peculiar about it?

TRICAMP. Er—yes—that's funny!

CORNÉLIUS. What?

TRICAMP. It's twisted, and stands upright, like an open tulip.

CORNÉLIUS. Ah!

TRICAMP. Precaution of Mademoiselle's—she was afraid of making a disturbance. Pull the wire a little.

CORNÉLIUS. (*Pulling from above*) Does it move?

TRICAMP. No.

CORNÉLIUS. (*Joyfully*) Then the spring is twisted?

TRICAMP. So it seems. She must have inserted a little piece of wood in it? (*CORNÉLIUS jumps quickly to the floor and looks at the bell*)

TRICAMP. What's the matter?

CORNÉLIUS. (*With an exclamation of joy as he examines the interior part of the bell*) Oh, ho!

TRICAMP. Made a discovery?

CORNÉLIUS. (*At the fireplace, very excited*) Yes!

TRICAMP. Where is your thief? Show him to me. He escaped, I imagine, through the flue? Or the door? Or the window? Eh?

CORNÉLIUS. Perhaps the window! (*He pulls back the curtain and shows the bars outside the window*)

TRICAMP. Clever thief! Why, he couldn't even put his hand through!

CORNÉLIUS. (*Looking at the glass*) Here is a tiny hole in the glass!

TRICAMP. (*In amazement*) A hole in the glass! (*In silence TRICAMP watches CORNÉLIUS, who continues his examination*)

(*Enter BALTHAZAR and the OFFICERS.*)

BALTHAZAR. (*In an undertone*) Monsieur Tricamp, she has run away!

TRICAMP. Run away!

BALTHAZAR. Through the garden.

TRICAMP. Ah—now I see! (*Pointing to CORNÉLIUS*) The man with the package: the accomplice!

BALTHAZAR. What!

TRICAMP. Yes, for the past fifteen minutes he has been playing with the bells and wires, in order to give her time to get away. (*He rushes out*)

BALTHAZAR. (*Frightened*) Cornélius!

CORNÉLIUS. (*Standing on a chair, where he has been examining the upper part of the window*) At last!

BALTHAZAR. You see, she *was* guilty: she has run away!

CORNÉLIUS. (*Leaping to the floor*) I see, yes: she is innocent! We are the guilty ones. We are all fools!

BALTHAZAR. You seem crazy!

CORNÉLIUS. I have the thief, and if you want to know his name—

BALTHAZAR. (*Scoffingly*) It is——?

CORNÉLIUS. The lightning! (*At this moment cries are heard outside in the street*) Listen!—In the direction of the Amstel!

BALTHAZAR. That's the way Christiane went!

CORNÉLIUS. Not that!

BALTHAZAR. (*Running to the window*) They are stopping in front of the door!

CORNÉLIUS. What is it?

BALTHAZAR. Nothing—don't look!

CORNÉLIUS. (*Trying to go to the window*) I must!

BALTHAZAR. (*Struggling with him*) No!

(CORNÉLIUS *frees himself and makes for the window at the moment when CHRISTIANE is borne into the room by PETERSEN. They are followed by TRICAMP, GUDULE, SARA, VANDERVEN, OFFICERS, and a number of other people from the street. CHRISTIANE is placed in a chair to the right, and immediately surrounded.*)

TRICAMP. She tried to jump into the Amstel. If it had not been for this brave man—(*He points to PETERSEN*)

CORNÉLIUS. (*On his knees before CHRISTIANE*)
Christiane!

BALTHAZAR. Christiane!

CORNÉLIUS. Listen to me, look at me—Christiane—Christiane—I love you—You are innocent—Christiane—

TRICAMP. Monsieur Cornélius, we must—

CORNÉLIUS. Keep still, I tell you. There, she moved!

(CHRISTIANE *moves her head a little.*)

GUDULE. She *did* move! (*CHRISTIANE appears to be making an effort to speak*)

CORNÉLIUS. Don't speak!—Dearest, you are saved! I love you!

TRICAMP. Of course! Now I shall take my men away: we shall not think of arresting her in her present state.

CORNÉLIUS. Arresting her? That is all you think about.

TRICAMP. What else can I do?

CORNÉLIUS. I tell you, I know who the thief is.

TRICAMP. May I know the name?

BALTHAZAR. The lightning, Monsieur Tricamp!

ALL. The lightning!

CORNÉLIUS. Yes, the lightning. It came down the chimney into the study; it made its way direct to metallic objects, licked up silver and gold, twisted and melted the keys and locks, broke the bell wires, stuck the dagger into the wall, and then made its escape through the window, leaving in its wake this black pearl.

TRICAMP. Do you mean to tell me that it was the lightning that tore off that part of the wall without burning it?

CORNÉLIUS. It has been known to do stranger things! Look, man! Read up on the subject! Don't you know that brass tacks have been torn from chairs and driven into mirrors without breaking the glass? That whole walls have been carried for a distance of twenty feet, intact?

TRICAMP. Possibly, but what about gold and jewels?

CORNÉLIUS. (*Jumping onto the table and pulling aside the bell*) Jewels? Here they are in an ingot. (*He brings forth a solid mass of gold, silver, and jewels*)

TRICAMP. (*Stupefied*) In the bell?

CORNÉLIUS. Of course. The steel wire was a conductor!

BALTHAZAR. Is my locket there?

CORNÉLIUS. Yes, and your ducats and your flower.

BALTHAZAR. (*Pleased*) The flower?

TRICAMP. Very well. But tell me about that mysterious package—(*To CHRISTIANE*) that you gave to the man?

PETERSEN. Here is the man.

BALTHAZAR. Petersen!

PETERSEN. And the package—

CHRISTIANE. (*Continuing for him*) Some clothes I had made for his little children. They are

sick, Monsieur. But I didn't say anything about it, because Monsieur Balthazar would have scolded me.

TRICAMP. Very well, Petersen. (*To CORNÉLIUS*) Tell me, what gave you the idea?

CORNÉLIUS. The black pearl which you handed me, challenging me to find *her* innocent!

TRICAMP. Well?

CORNÉLIUS. Well, look at that tiny white spot. That is where the lightning struck it.

TRICAMP. (*Bowing*) Well, evidently I cannot arrest the lightning! (*To CHRISTIANE*) My dear child, I shall not arrest you either, but I shall marry you; I prefer that.

CHRISTIANE. (*Feebly*) Marry me, to whom?

CORNÉLIUS. To me, Christiane—if you love me and will still have me?

CHRISTIANE. (*Rising*) You—it's you? (*She cannot continue*)

CORNÉLIUS. Don't speak, Christiane. (*He gently closes her lips*)

CHRISTIANE. (*Taking his hand away and smiling*) I must speak if you want me to say, Yes!

Curtain

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